



Morning Alert - Tuesday, December 12, 2017

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## HEADLINES

### Morning news

NHK led with a report that Charles Jenkins, the husband of Japanese abductee Hitomi Soga, died at the age of 77 on Monday. NTV and Fuji TV led with reports on a terrorist bombing near Times Square in New York that injured four people. TV Asahi reported on a forecast for cold weather on the Sea of Japan coast today. TBS continued to report on the alleged assault by sumo grand champion Harumafuji.

Major front-page items in national dailies included updates on Tokyo prosecutors' ongoing probe into alleged bid-rigging by Obayashi Corp. for a maglev train project, the Nobel Peace Prize ceremony on Monday, and an out-of-court settlement to be reached between Toshiba and Western Digital regarding Toshiba's plan to spin off its flash memory division.

## INTERNATIONAL

### Top Russian military officer expresses concern about U.S.-Japan joint drills

Yomiuri, Asahi, and Nikkei took up a meeting held yesterday in Tokyo between Defense Minister Onodera and Chief of the General Staff of the Russian Armed Forces Gen. Gerasimov, during which they agreed that Pyongyang must not be allowed to possess nuclear and missile capabilities. The Russian general underscored that the DPRK nuclear and missile crisis can be resolved only through peaceful means. He expressed apprehension about enhanced U.S.-Japan and U.S.-Japan-South Korea training with North Korea in mind by saying that the training further destabilizes the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

According to Yomiuri, the Russian military leader expressed understanding for Onodera's explanation that Tokyo's planned procurement of Aegis Ashore batteries is intended to defend Japan from DPRK missiles and hence will not pose a threat to Russia or other countries in the region. However, other papers said Gerasimov voiced qualms by saying that the state-of-the-art missile defense platform is managed by the U.S. military, to which Onodera responded by saying that the Japanese Aegis Ashore batteries will be managed by the SDF.

Asahi wrote that as Moscow is set to beef up its defenses in the Northern Territories and their vicinity, Japan's goal of achieving a breakthrough in the territorial dispute appears elusive. The paper added that National Security Secretariat Secretary General Yachi plans to visit Moscow tomorrow to hold talks with senior Putin administration officials to ease Russian concerns about the Aegis Ashore deployment.

### **Japanese, ROK parliamentarians discuss bilateral relations, North Korea**

Most papers wrote that some 150 Japanese and South Korean politicians gathered in Tokyo yesterday to discuss bilateral relations and the North Korean situation. They issued a statement confirming close cooperation in putting an end to Pyongyang's nuclear and missile development. However, the statement did not mention the implementation of the 2015 comfort women agreement perhaps out of deference to the Moon administration's hesitancy to embrace it. The participants reportedly engaged in "heated debate" on the history dispute. Several representatives of the ROK parliamentarians later met with Prime Minister Abe, who voiced hope for President Moon to visit Japan at an early date.

### **Japan, France to confirm defense coordination with China in mind**

Yomiuri reported that the GOJ and the French government plan to hold a 2+2 foreign and defense ministerial meeting in Tokyo in late January with the goal of curbing China's maritime advancement in the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean. While projecting that the participants will affirm the importance of the rule of law and freedom of navigation, the article said the Japanese side is hoping to enlist support from France for the U.S.-Japan diplomatic initiative of creating a "free and open Indo-Pacific." The four ministers are also expected to discuss North Korea and bilateral defense cooperation, including accelerated discussions on an acquisition and cross servicing agreement and increased joint training between the two militaries. The daily added that in a planned 2+2 meeting with the UK to be held in London on Thursday, the Japanese side will explain the Indo-Pacific initiative.

### **Comfort women memorial erected in Manila**

Sankei front-paged a finding that a statue commemorating the suffering of Philippine comfort women was erected in central Manila by a government panel on history, noting that the Japanese Embassy has filed a protest with the Philippine government. This is reportedly the first time for such a memorial to be erected in the Southeast Asian country.

## SECURITY

### **U.S., Japan, South Korea conduct joint training**

Asahi and Nikkei reported that the navies of the U.S., Japan, and South Korea began a joint drill in the Sea of Japan on Monday to ensure that the three navies' Aegis warships can accurately detect and intercept enemy missiles without fail. The two-day drill is the fourth of its kind to be conducted this year.

### **U.S. service member indicted for fatal DUI accident**

Sankei wrote that the Naha District Prosecutors Office on Monday pressed charges against a 21-year-old U.S. Marine in Okinawa on suspicion of drunken driving resulting in death. A local driver was killed in a traffic accident caused by the suspect who was allegedly driving a military vehicle off duty under the influence of alcohol in Naha City on Nov. 19.

## ECONOMY

### **USTR Lighthizer calls for reform of WTO**

Yomiuri highlighted a speech delivered by USTR Lighthizer during a WTO ministerial conference that opened in Buenos Aires on Sunday, noting that the top U.S. trade official emphasized the importance of WTO reforms by saying: "The WTO is obviously an important institution. But serious challenges exist. We have to ask ourselves whether the current litigation structure makes sense." While noting that the Trump administration has been critical of the WTO, the daily said Lighthizer did not mention the U.S.'s possible withdrawal from the global trade body and stated: "Much can and should be done at the WTO to help make markets more efficient.... The United States looks forward to working with all WTO members....to create rules that will lead to more efficient markets."

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